

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

E. JEAN CARROLL,

Plaintiff,

-against-

DONALD J. TRUMP, in his personal capacity,

Defendant.

Index No. _____

**COMPLAINT AND
JURY DEMAND**

Plaintiff E. Jean Carroll (“Plaintiff” or “Carroll”), by and through her attorneys at Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP, alleges as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. Nobody in this nation is above the law. Nobody is entitled to conceal acts of sexual assault behind a wall of defamatory falsehoods and deflections. The rape of a woman is a violent crime; compounding that crime with acts of malicious libel is abhorrent. Yet that is what Defendant Donald J. Trump did to Plaintiff E. Jean Carroll.

2. Roughly 23 years ago, playful banter at the luxury department store Bergdorf Goodman on Fifth Avenue in New York City took a dark turn when Trump seized Carroll, forced her up against a dressing room wall, pinned her in place with his shoulder, and raped her.

3. In the aftermath, Carroll confided in two close friends. One urged her to report the crime to the police, but the other warned that Trump would ruin her life and livelihood if she reported it.

4. Carroll chose silence—and remained silent for over two decades.

5. Carroll knew then that sexual assault was pervasive. She also knew that men have been assaulting women and getting away with it since before she was born. And she knew that while a woman who accused *any* man of rape was rarely believed, a woman who accused a rich, famous, violent man of rape would probably lose everything. She therefore reasonably concluded that if she accused Donald Trump of rape he would bury her in threats and lawsuits, and she would probably lose her reputation, not to mention everything she had worked for and achieved.

6. Near the end of the 2016 presidential election, Carroll watched in horror as numerous women offered highly credible (and painfully familiar) accounts of Trump assaulting them; Trump responded with insults and denials; the public fractured; and Trump not only won the election, but grew *more* popular with some supporters as a result of the controversy.

7. Carroll's mother, a respected Republican official in Indiana, was dying during the last six weeks of the presidential election. Carroll, wanting to make her mother's last days as pleasant as possible and avoid causing her any pain, decided to remain silent about what Trump had done to her.

8. But that all changed in late 2017, when the Harvey Weinstein scandal and its aftermath signaled a profound shift in how American society responds to accusations of sexual misconduct by powerful men. It suddenly seemed possible that even Trump could be held to account.

9. For Carroll, that project grew more urgent—and more personal—as the #MeToo era prompted a flood of new letters to her advice column seeking her counsel about how to respond to sexual assault and abuse. In her column, Carroll encourages her readers to be brave, to think clearly, and to seek justice. When readers overcome with the doubt and anxiety have turned to her seeking advice, Carroll has always advised taking action. But she never confessed her own

experiences. She never revealed that she, too, had been a victim of sexual assault. Over time, as described below, the contradiction between Carroll's words and her actions became increasingly untenable.

10. Carroll is a journalist. She watched as a throng of women came forward and accused Trump of sexual assault, only to be denigrated and then brushed aside. When she felt she should finally come forward herself, Carroll wanted to do it differently. She decided to describe Trump's rape in a book she had already begun to write about her experiences with various men. She did not want to tell her story to the police, a newspaper, an elected official, or a fellow journalist, and be treated as a "victim." In other words, she wanted to tell her own story on her own terms.

11. When Carroll's account was published, Trump lashed out with a series of false and defamatory statements. He denied the rape. But there was more: he also denied ever having met Carroll or even knowing who she was. Through express statements and deliberate implications, he accused Carroll of lying about the rape in order to increase book sales, carry out a political agenda, advance a conspiracy with the Democratic Party, and make money. He also deliberately implied that she had falsely accused other men of rape. For good measure, he insulted her physical appearance.

12. Each of these statements was false. Each of them was defamatory.

13. Trump knew that these statements were false; at a bare minimum, he acted with reckless disregard for their truth or falsity. Trump had recognized Carroll on sight at Bergdorf Goodman. He knew who she was when he raped her, and he knew who she was in 2019. He certainly knew that she was telling the truth. After he lied about attacking her, he surrounded that central lie with a swarm of related lies in an effort to explain why she would invent an accusation of rape. To do so, he smeared her integrity, honesty, and dignity—all in the national press.

14. These lies were familiar to Trump. He had used them before, when other women stated that he had grabbed, groped, or raped them.

15. Trump's defamatory statements injured Carroll. They inflicted emotional pain and suffering, they damaged her reputation, and they caused substantial professional harm.

16. Carroll filed this lawsuit to obtain redress for those injuries and to demonstrate that even a man as powerful as Trump can be held accountable under the law.

THE PARTIES

17. Plaintiff E. Jean Carroll is a journalist, author, former writer for Saturday Night Live, and advice columnist for *Elle* magazine. She is a resident of the State of New York.

18. Defendant Donald J. Trump is currently the President of the United States, although he is sued here only in his personal capacity. Since taking office, Trump has filed several lawsuits in his personal capacity, including *Trump v. Vance, Jr. et al.*, No. 19 Civ. 8694 (S.D.N.Y.), *Trump et al. v. Deutsche Bank AG et al.*, No. 19 Civ. 3826 (S.D.N.Y.), *Donald J. Trump for President, Inc. et al. v. Padilla et al.*, No. 19 Civ. 1501 (E.D. Cal.), *Trump v. Committee on Ways and Means of the U.S. House of Representatives et al.*, No. 19 Civ. 2173 (D.D.C.), and *Trump et al. v. Committee on Oversight and Reform of the U.S. House of Representatives et al.*, No. 19 Civ. 1136 (D.D.C.). Trump is also defending a related case pending in this Court. *See Zervos v. Trump*, No. 150522/2017 (N.Y. Sup. Ct., N.Y. Cty.). Trump is a resident of the State of New York.

JURY DEMAND

19. Plaintiff E. Jean Carroll hereby demands a trial by jury.

JURISDICTION & VENUE

20. This Court has jurisdiction pursuant to NY CPLR § 301.

21. Venue is proper in this county pursuant to NY CPLR § 503 and § 509.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**I. TRUMP RAPES CARROLL AT BERGDORF GOODMAN**

22. One evening between the fall of 1995 and the spring of 1996, Carroll left work and went to Bergdorf Goodman, the luxury department store on Fifth Avenue in New York City. She was and remains a regular shopper at Bergdorf's.

23. That evening, Carroll did not find whatever she was looking for and prepared to leave Bergdorf's empty-handed. As she exited through Bergdorf's revolving side door on 58th Street, Trump arrived and entered through that very same door, which was cater-cornered across from the Plaza Hotel.

24. Trump instantly recognized Carroll on sight. They had met at least once before and had long traveled in the same New York City media circles. In this period, Carroll was doing the daily *Ask E. Jean* TV show, a small hit on the "America's Talking" network started by Roger Ailes. She was also on a frequent guest and commentator on the widely watched *Today* show.

25. Trump put up his hand to stop her from exiting and said, "Hey, you're that advice lady!" Carroll, struck by his boyish good looks, responded by saying, "Hey, you're that real estate tycoon!"

26. Trump said that he was at Bergdorf's to buy a present for "a girl" and asked Carroll to come advise him. Carroll was surprised but thrilled that Trump would want her advice. She stuck around, imagining the funny stories that she might later recount.

27. Trump and Carroll began searching for a gift that Trump could give to the unnamed girl. As they stood just inside the door, Carroll pointed to the handbags. Trump made a face; he did not like that idea. Carroll instead suggested a hat. Trump walked over, going straight for a fur hat, prompting Carroll to object that no woman would wear a dead animal on her head.

28. As Trump cuddled the fur hat, Carroll asked how old “the girl” was. Trump did not answer, instead asking Carroll how old she was. When Carroll replied that she was fifty-two years old, he taunted her, “You’re so *old*!”

29. Trump then had an idea: He would buy lingerie instead.

30. Trump and Carroll rode up the escalator to the lingerie department. When they arrived, it was uncharacteristically empty, with no sales attendant in sight. Sitting on the counter near them were two or three boxes and a see-through bodysuit in lilac gray.

31. Snatching the bodysuit, Trump insisted that Carroll try it on. Bemused, Carroll responded that *he* should try it on himself, adding that it was his color. Trump and Carroll went back and forth, teasing each other about who should try on the bodysuit.

32. Suddenly, Trump grabbed Carroll’s arm and said, “Let’s put this on.”

33. Trump maneuvered Carroll to the dressing room. As they moved, Carroll laughed, thinking to herself that she would make him put the bodysuit on over his pants.

34. Strangely for Bergdorf’s, the dressing room door was open and unlocked.

35. Trump closed the door of the dressing room.

36. Immediately, Trump lunged at Carroll, pushing her against the wall, bumping her head quite badly, and putting his mouth on her lips.

37. Carroll shoved him back. Utterly shocked by Trump’s unexpected attack, Carroll burst out in awkward laughter. She could hardly process the insanity of the situation. She also hoped, at least at first, that laughter would bruise his ego and cause him to retreat.

38. But Trump did not stop. He seized both of her arms and pushed her up against the wall again, bumping her head a second time. While pinning Carroll against the wall with his shoulder, Trump jammed his hand under her coatdress and pulled down her tights.

39. Trump opened his overcoat and unzipped his pants. Trump then pushed his fingers around Carroll's genitals and forced his penis inside of her.

40. Carroll resisted, struggling to break free. She tried to stomp his foot with her high heels. She tried to push him away with her one free hand (as she kept holding her purse with the other). Finally, she raised a knee up high enough to push him out and off her.

41. Carroll ran out of the dressing room, out of Bergdorf's, and onto Fifth Avenue.

42. The whole attack lasted two to three minutes.

II. CARROLL CONFIDES IN TWO FRIENDS ABOUT THE RAPE

43. As soon as she was outside Bergdorf's, Carroll pulled her phone out of her purse and called her friend Lisa Birnbach, the author, journalist, and correspondent on TV morning shows.¹ Carroll was breathless and still reeling from the assault. She kept laughing, manically—her way of coping with the stress and trauma that she had just experienced.

44. Carroll recounted to Birnbach how Trump had attacked her in Bergdorf's dressing room. She told Birnbach how Trump had pulled down her tights and put his penis inside of her.

45. "He raped you," Birnbach kept repeating. She begged Carroll to go to the police and offered to accompany her. Still in shock and reluctant to think of herself as a rape victim, Carroll did not want to speak to the police. She told Birnbach that it was just a few minutes of her life and that it was over. She implored Birnbach never to tell anyone what had happened.

46. Carroll drove home and crawled straight into bed.

47. Over the next few days, Carroll confided in a second friend, the New York City journalist and news anchor Carol Martin. They sat together in the kitchen as Carroll described the

¹ Birnbach wrote a story about Trump's Mar-a-Lago that was published in February 1996. See Lisa Birnbach, *Mi Casa Es Su Casa*, NEW YORK (Feb. 12, 1996). Birnbach has suggested that it was because of her work on that article that Carroll called her immediately after the assault.

rape. This time, Carroll did not laugh. Nobody laughed. The gravity of the assault had finally started to sink in.

48. Martin solemnly advised Carroll to tell no one. Recognizing that Trump was a powerful man, Martin feared that if her friend came forward, disaster would ensue. Martin warned Carroll, in sum and substance: “Tell no one. Forget it! He has two hundred lawyers. He’ll bury you.”

49. Carroll took Martin’s advice. She knew how brutal and dangerous Trump could be.

50. Carroll was also afraid of being dragged through the mud if she reported the rape. She was convinced that nobody would believe her if she came forward. And like so many other survivors of sexual assault, Carroll also blamed herself. She called herself “stupid.” She told herself that she “deserved it” for agreeing to go lingerie shopping with Trump. She struggled with the guilt that, somehow, though she had fought to protect herself from his attack, it was her fault that Trump had raped her because she had entered that Bergdorf dressing room.

51. Fundamentally, Carroll was raised to believe that strong women get by in the world with a stiff upper lip—*i.e.*, by putting hardship and suffering behind them. She believed that strong women laugh at disasters because feeling sad only doubles the burden. To Carroll, laughter is how women have dealt with calamity for thousands of years. So Carroll put her chin up and tried to move on.

52. Carroll thus chose silence.

53. Carroll did not mention the rape again for over twenty years. She did not want to be seen—or to see herself—as a victim of sexual assault.

54. Carroll has not had sex with anyone since that day when Trump raped her.

III. CARROLL REMAINS SILENT FOR TWENTY YEARS

55. For the next twenty years, Carroll pursued her career as a writer and advice columnist. Over time, she built a loyal audience and enjoyed the support of her publisher. Her *Ask E. Jean* advice column in *Elle* magazine became the longest, still-active advice column in American publishing. Its success resulted in large part from the many letters sent to her by readers.

56. Carroll's column in *Elle* was about life and love. Readers' questions ranged from the lighthearted to the deeply personal. From time to time, readers would ask questions about whether behavior that they experienced at work, at church, and in their relationships was appropriate. When Carroll detected sexism or abuse, she did her level best to call it out and to help women protect themselves.

57. One reader, for example, despaired in 1994, "My boss is always rubbing up against me He scares me because he's very powerful and could ruin me." Carroll responded: "Darling, if the old snake has done so much to help your career, why are you still an assistant? Sex harassers are filthy yellow sneaking cowards and must be won over, or crushed If all else fails, next time the old waterhead touches you, give him a knee in the groin. You've got nowhere to go but up."²

58. Another reader had been raped when thirteen years old and sought advice from Carroll because her rapist had just been hired as a co-worker. Carroll responded: "[T]he gentleness of your [letter] speaks strongly for your forgiving nature; however, it makes my duty *very* difficult. Because now I must harden your soul. I must twist a little bit of steel—I'd try a big block of metal

² Reprinted in E. JEAN CARROLL, A DOG IN HEAT IS A HOT DOG AND OTHER RULES TO LIVE BY 28-29 (1996).

if I could—around your backbone, and persuade you to report your friend to the police.”³ Carroll added:

“First, call your rape crisis center and speak with a counselor. Second, join a group of rape survivors—with their hardy support, you’ll start constructing a world for *yourself* and leave the world the rapist built for you. And, third, find another job at once. (Do *not* tell your employer about the rape. Do *not* inform the rapist of these steps. Stay cool. He’s dangerous.)”⁴

59. In her advice columns, Carroll sought to offer witty, wise, and worldly guidance, and to address her readers in a clear, straightforward manner. She often urged readers to speak the truth and to recognize patterns of rationalization and abuse. Readers’ perception of Carroll as honest, thoughtful, frank, and well-meaning were essential to Carroll’s professional success.

60. But in responding to her readers, Carroll did not confess her own life experiences, including the sexual assault by Trump described above.

61. During the last month of the election of 2016, Carroll watched a multitude of women reveal that Trump had engaged in sexual misconduct. She saw Trump brutally attacking his accusers on a national stage—denying their accusations, while also savaging their reputations and insulting their appearance.

62. And as Carroll sat at the bedside of her dying mother in a Bloomington, Indiana hospital, watching numerous, credible women stun the nation with their stories of Trump’s sexual brutality, Carroll briefly considered whether she, too, should reveal that Trump had raped her. But she feared—just as she had for decades—that Trump would lie his way out of it, while destroying her life and reputation. He had done it before to plenty of women and, it seemed to Carroll, he would readily do it again. And, worst of all, coming forward with her story would also cause a

³ *Id.* at 141-42.

⁴ *Id.* at 142.

media storm in Indiana and destroy her mother's last happy days on the planet. Carroll feared that it would cost her and her family dearly without actually changing anything, especially since any accusation made during the presidential campaign would be characterized by Trump and his allies as a stunt to thwart his election.

63. Indeed, Carroll worried that she might make Trump *more* popular in states like Indiana by revealing the rape, since his electoral fortunes had steadily improved despite credible allegations of sexual abuse. To Carroll, it appeared that some of Trump's political supporters actually admired the fact that Trump was rich enough, macho enough, and powerful enough to be sued by—and to pay off—all these women he had groped and penetrated (especially porn stars and *Playboy* models).

64. Carroll, in honor of her mother's remarkable life, many years of which were spent as a local and loyal Republican elected official, and because she thought the publicity would help Trump win the election, warily persisted in her decades-old silence.

65. Carroll's mother died on October 11, 2016. In 2017, Carroll decided to write a book drawing on her observations as an advice columnist, but focusing specifically on her own life and trying to understand why so many *Ask E. Jean* letter-writers complained about men. On the morning of October 5, 2017, Carroll set out on a road trip, traveling to towns named after women. When she arrived in each town named after a woman (Angelica, New York, Tallulah, Louisiana, Marianna, Arkansas, and so forth), she spoke to women from all walks of life about their relationships with men. She asked many of her subjects about the roles that men play in their lives.

IV. CARROLL DECIDES TO SPEAK OUT

66. On the very day Carroll began her road trip for her book, October 5, 2017, the *New York Times* revealed that Harvey Weinstein had sexually assaulted and harassed dozens of women

in the film industry.⁵ The news went off in Carroll's mind like a bomb. She could not stop reading. Painful memories of abuse at the hands of men, including Trump, swept over her.

67. Days later, several women accused Weinstein of rape.⁶ It soon became clear to Carroll, and to the American people, that Weinstein's abuses had been enabled for decades by a loose network of loyalists and lawyers, who had ensured that Weinstein evaded accountability for his exploitation of women—even though it was an open secret in Hollywood.

68. As the Weinstein scandal persisted, Carroll saw society respond to the accusations with a seriousness and depth of self-reflection that she had never seen before; all too often, and as recently as the 2016 election, many Americans had brushed aside or marginalized accusations of sexual misconduct by powerful men. Carroll also saw other women suddenly feel emboldened to come forward with their own reports of harassment, exploitation, abuse, violence, and rape.

69. Carroll was moved by this experience. The walls that she had erected in her mind—the fear that Trump would emerge unscathed, the wariness of allowing him and his allies to come after her, the doubt that speaking up would actually matter, and the nagging anxiety that she was somehow to blame for being raped—began to crumble. Decades of deflection, diversion, and denial dissolved, resurfacing memories and feelings that she had hidden away.

70. Carroll was struck by the fact that Weinstein, for all his wealth and power, could still be held accountable for his sexual misconduct. She saw how women had at last changed the public conversation by saying “Me Too” and by demanding accountability.

⁵ Jodi Kantor & Megan Twohey, *Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 5, 2017).

⁶ Ronan Farrow, *From Aggressive Overtures to Sexual Assault: Harvey Weinstein's Accusers Tell Their Stories*, NEW YORKER (Oct. 10, 2017).

71. These observations lead Carroll to reflect again on her column in *Elle* magazine, and to ask whether she was a hypocrite. For decades, she had paired her trademarked wit with steely resolve in confronting the everyday unfairness—and, all too often, the abuse—that her (largely female) readers confessed. Carroll’s written persona was brave. But she *still* had not confessed her own experiences of abuse, her fear of coming forward, or her creeping self-doubt.

72. These internal reflections loomed larger in her mind—and became inescapable—as more readers of Carroll’s advice column began asking, “Should I come forward with my account of surviving sexual abuse or harassment?”

73. Carroll finally decided that she owed her readers the truth. She also owed them (and many other women) solidarity in their efforts to bring justice and accountability to powerful men who had engaged in sexual assault and gotten away with it. She knew that it would be painful to speak up. But she also knew that it was the right thing to do so.

74. While Carroll was on the road trip across the country talking to women as research for her book, she started a list of the 21 most hideous men she had ever encountered—men who had, each in his own way, left indelible and ugly marks on her story. This list grew into a book, *What Do We Need Men For?: A Modest Proposal*. In that book, Carroll interspersed the stories of women she had met while traveling the country with the men on her “Most Hideous List.”

75. Two men on the Most Hideous List haunted Carroll the most. The first was Cam Parks, the Waterfront Director at her Girl Scout camp, a man who sexually abused her every day during a two-week period when she was twelve. The second was Donald Trump, the man who raped her when she was 52. Carroll described that attack in detail.

76. Carroll knew a book was the right place for her to come forward about Trump’s assault. Writing is Carroll’s lifeblood; she writes to process the world around her and to reveal her

inner self. It's her normal way of living: she writes about what happens to her, often in a confessional, idiosyncratic manner. She also believed that a book would allow her to control her narrative and speak directly to her readers. This was important. Carroll did not want to be, or to act like, a victim. She wanted to tell her story on her terms, rather than as filtered through journalists or social media. Her language was specific.

77. In her book, Carroll truthfully described, in meticulous detail, the rape in Bergdorf Goodman:

"The next moment, still wearing correct business attire, shirt, tie, suit jacket, overcoat, he opens the overcoat, unzips his pants, and, forcing his fingers around my private area, then thrusts his penis halfway—or completely—I'm not certain—inside me."⁷

78. She also explained why she had not come forward earlier:

"Receiving death threats, being driven from my home, being dismissed, being dragged through the mud, and joining the sixteen women who've come forward with credible stories about how the man grabbed, badgered, belittled, mauled, molested, and assaulted them, only to see the man turn it around, deny, threaten, and attack them, never sounded like much fun. Also, I'm a coward."⁸

79. At noon on June 21, 2019, *New York* magazine published Carroll's account of the rape on NYMag.com as an excerpt of her forthcoming book. The excerpt first appeared on *The Cut*, a vertical on NYMag.com. The excerpt appeared on newsstands three days later in the June 24-July 7 print edition.

80. Carroll's book was released by St. Martin's Press on July 2, 2019.

⁷ E. JEAN CARROLL, WHAT DO WE NEED MEN FOR?: A MODEST PROPOSAL 248 (2019).

⁸ *Id.* at 244.

V. TRUMP REPEATEDLY DENIES RAPING CARROLL AND MAKES A SLEW OF FALSE, INSULTING STATEMENTS ABOUT HER

81. In three statements—published on June 21, 22, and 24 respectively—Trump responded to Carroll by publicly, falsely, and maliciously smearing her reputation.

82. On June 21, 2019, Trump issued the following public statement:

“Regarding the ‘story’ by E. Jean Carroll, claiming she once encountered me at Bergdorf Goodman 23 years ago. I’ve never met this person in my life. She is trying to sell a new book—that should indicate her motivation. It should be sold in the fiction section.

Shame on those who make up false stories of assault to try to get publicity for themselves, or sell a book, or carry out a political agenda—like Julie Swetnick who falsely accused Justice Brett Kavanaugh. It’s just as bad for people to believe it, particularly when there is zero evidence. Worse still for a dying publication to try to prop itself up by peddling fake news—it’s an epidemic.

Ms. Carroll & New York Magazine: No pictures? No surveillance? No video? No reports? No sales attendants around?? I would like to thank Bergdorf Goodman for confirming that they have no video footage of any such incident, because it never happened.

False accusations diminish the severity of real assault. All should condemn false accusations and any actual assault in the strongest possible terms.

If anyone has information that the Democratic Party is working with Ms. Carroll or New York Magazine, please notify us as soon as possible. The world should know what’s really going on. It is a disgrace and people should pay dearly for such false accusations.”

83. Upon information and belief, Trump’s June 21 statement was first given to the press, including Laura Litvan of *Bloomberg News*, who posted it on Twitter at 2:17 p.m.⁹

⁹ See Laura Litvan (@LauraLitvan), Twitter (June 21, 2019 2:17 PM), <https://twitter.com/LauraLitvan/status/1142179819075121154>.

84. Trump's June 21 statement was subsequently shared online by other journalists and covered by many leading news sources as Trump's statement in response to Carroll.¹⁰

85. In the June 21 statement, Trump falsely stated that he did not rape Carroll.

86. In the June 21 statement, Trump falsely stated that he had never met Carroll.

87. In the June 21 statement, Trump falsely implied and affirmatively intended to imply that he had no idea who Carroll was.

¹⁰ See, e.g., AFP News Agency, *US Writer Says Trump Sexually Assaulted Her in Mid-1990s*, AL JAZEERA, (June 21, 2019); Alexandra Alter, *E. Jean Carroll Accuses Trump of Sexual Assault in Her Memoir*, N.Y. TIMES (June 21, 2019); Jenna Amatulli, *Trump on E. Jean Carroll Rape Allegation: "I've Never Met This Person in My Life"*, HUFFINGTON POST (June 21, 2019); Amber Athey, *Trump Responds to Rape Accuser: "People Should Pay Dearly for Such False Accusations"*, DAILY CALLER (June 21, 2019); Brian Bennet, *Trump Says He "Never Met" Author Who Has Accused Him of Sexual Assault*, TIME (June 21, 2019); Ellie Bufkin, *Trump Issues Blistering Denial of E. Jean Carroll's Rape Allegation*, WASH. EXAMINER (June 21, 2019); Adam Carlson, *Noted Advice Columnist Says Trump Raped Her in Manhattan Department Store in the '90s—"Never Happened," Trump Responds*, PEOPLE MAG. (June 21, 2019); Matthew Choi, *Trump Dismisses New Sexual Assault Allegation*, POLITICO (June 21, 2019); Casey Darnell, *Writer Says She Was Raped by Trump in 1990s*, YAHOO! NEWS (June 21, 2019); EJ Dickson, *E. Jean Carroll Alleges President Donald Trump Assaulted Her*, ROLLING STONE (June 21, 2019); Vivian Ho & Lauren Gambino, *Evening Summary: Trump Responds to E Jean Carroll's Allegations*, GUARDIAN (June 21, 2019); Colby Itkowitz, *Magazine Columnist Accuses Trump of Sexual Assault More than Two Decades Ago, an Allegation He Denies*, WASH. POST (June 21, 2019); Sarah Jones, *E. Jean Carroll: "Trump Attacked Me in the Dressing Room of Bergdorf Goodman."*, N.Y. MAG. (June 21, 2019); Hilary Lewis, *E. Jean Carroll Says Bringing Rape Charges Against Trump Would Be "Disrespectful" to Migrant Women*, HOLLYWOOD REP. (June 22, 2019); Caitlin Mac Neal, *Advice Columnist E. Jean Carroll Accuses Donald Trump Of Sexual Assault*, TALKING POINTS MEMO (June 21, 2019); Alex Pappas, *Longtime Advice Columnist E. Jean Carroll Accuses Trump of Sexual Assault in 1990s*, FOX NEWS, (June 21, 2019); Daniel Politi, *Trump Goes on Tirade to Deny Latest Assault Allegation: Women Are "Paid Money" to Make False Claims*, SLATE (June 22, 2019); Christina Prignano, *Author E. Jean Carroll Accuses President Trump of Sexual Assault in 1990s*, BOS. GLOBE (June 21, 2019); Eliza Relman, *Trump Claims He's Never Met the Columnist Who Just Accused Him of Sexual Assault Despite Photo Evidence of Them Together*, BUS. INSIDER (June 21, 2019); Darlene Superville, *Trump Denies Knowing NY Woman Accusing Him of Sexual Assault*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (June 22, 2019); Jessica Taylor, *Trump Denies New Sexual Assault Allegation by Advice Columnist E. Jean Carroll*, NPR (June 21, 2019); Josh Wingrove, *Columnist E. Jean Carroll Accuses Trump of Sexual Assault in 1990s*, FORTUNE (June 21, 2019); *Trump Dismisses E. Jean Carroll Rape Allegation as "Fiction"*, BBC NEWS (June 22, 2019); Josh Wingrove, *Woman Accuses Trump of Sexual Assault at New York Store in 1990s*, BLOOMBERG (June 21, 2019).

88. In the June 21 statement, Trump falsely implied and affirmatively intended to imply that Carroll had invented the rape accusation as a ploy for increased book sales.

89. In the June 21 statement, Trump falsely implied and affirmatively intended to imply that Carroll invented the rape accusation to carry out a political agenda.

90. In the June 21 statement, Trump falsely implied and affirmatively intended to imply that Carroll invented the rape accusation as part of a conspiracy with the Democratic Party.

91. On June 22, 2019, Trump made the following statement to reporters:

“[Reporter]: [Y]ou had said earlier that you never met E. Jean Carroll. There was a photograph of you and her in the late 1980’s—

[Trump]: I have no idea who this woman is. This is a woman who has also accused other men of things, as you know. It is a totally false accusation. I think she was married—as I read; I have no idea who she is—but she was married to a, actually, nice guy, Johnson—a newscaster.

[Reporter]: You were in a photograph with her.

[Trump]: Standing with coat on in a line—give me a break—with my back to the camera. I have no idea who she is. What she did is—it’s terrible, what’s going on. So it’s a total false accusation and I don’t know anything about her. And she’s made this charge against others.

And, you know, people have to be careful because they’re playing with very dangerous territory. And when they do that—and it’s happening more and more. When you look at what happened to Justice Kavanaugh and you look at what’s happening to others, you can’t do that for the sake of publicity.

New York Magazine is a failing magazine. It’s ready to go out of business, from what I hear. They’ll do anything they can. But this was about many men, and I was one of the many men that she wrote about. It’s a totally false accusation. I have absolutely no idea who she is. There’s some picture where we’re shaking hands. It looks like at some kind of event. I have my coat on. I have my wife standing next to me. And I didn’t know her husband, but he was a newscaster. But I have no idea who she is—none whatsoever.

It’s a false accusation and it’s a disgrace that a magazine like New York—which is one of the reasons it’s failing. People don’t read it anymore, so they’re trying to get readership by using me. It’s not good.

You know, there were cases that the mainstream media didn't pick up. And I don't know if you've seen them. And they were put on Fox. But there were numerous cases where women were paid money to say bad things about me. You can't do that. You can't do that. And those women did wrong things—that women were actually paid money to say bad things about me.

But here's a case, it's an absolute disgrace that she's allowed to do that.”¹¹

92. Like his first statement, Trump's June 22 statement regarding Carroll was widely reported in the national press.¹²

93. In the June 22 statement, Trump falsely stated that he did not rape Carroll.

94. In the June 22 statement, Trump falsely stated that he had no idea who Carroll was.

95. In the June 22 statement, Trump falsely implied and affirmatively intended to imply that Carroll had falsely accused other men of sexual assault.

96. In the June 22 statement, Trump falsely implied and affirmatively intended to imply that Carroll had been paid money to invent the rape accusation against him.

¹¹ *Remarks by President Donald Trump Before Marine One Departure*, WHITE HOUSE (June 22, 2019).

¹² See, e.g., Matthew Chapman, *Trump Goes on Manic Tirade After Being Asked About New Rape Allegation: Women Get “Paid Money to Say Bad Things About Me”*, RAW STORY (June 22, 2019); William Cummings, *Writer E. Jean Carroll Made a Claim of Sexual Assault Against Trump. Here's What We Know*, USA TODAY (June 25, 2019); Gillian Edevane, *George Conway Says Trump's Credibility is “Annihilated” After President Denies Knowing Alleged Assault Victim*, NEWSWEEK (June 22, 2019); Lulu Garcia-Navarro, *“It Hurt. And It Was Against My Will”: Trump Accuser Stands by Her Story*, NPR (June 22, 2019); Amanda Holpuch, *Trump Repeats Contested Claim He Does Not Know Latest Sexual Assault Accuser*, GUARDIAN (June 22, 2019); Colby Itkowitz et al., *Trump Compares Himself to Kavanaugh in Latest Sexual Assault Allegation*, WASH. POST (June 22, 2019); Darlene Superville, *Trump Denies Knowing E. Jean Carroll, Woman Accusing Him of Sexual Assault in Department Store*, ABC NEWS (June 22, 2019); Darlene Superville, *Trump Denies Knowing NY Woman Accusing Him of Sexual Assault*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (June 22, 2019); Mihir Zaveri, *Trump Emphatically Denies Sexual Assault Allegation by E. Jean Carroll*, N.Y. TIMES (June 22, 2019); *Trump Dismisses E. Jean Carroll Rape Allegation as “Fiction”*, BBC NEWS (June 22, 2019).

97. Two days later, on June 24, 2019, *The Hill* released an interview in which Trump made the following statement in response to Carroll: “I’ll say it with great respect: Number one, she’s not my type. Number two, it never happened. It never happened, OK?”¹³

98. Trump’s statement in *The Hill* was widely reported by the national press.¹⁴

99. This insulting statement was consistent with Trump’s response to other accusations of sexual assault. About one woman who claimed he groped her and tried to put his hand up her skirt while they were seated next to each other on an airplane, Trump told crowds at a rally,

¹³ Jordan Fabian & Saagar Enjeti, *EXCLUSIVE: Trump Vehemently Denies E. Jean Carroll Allegation, Says “She’s Not My Type”*, HILL (June 24, 2019).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Julia Arciga, *Trump on E. Jean Carroll’s Assault Allegations: “She’s Not My Type”*, DAILY BEAST (June 24, 2019); Associated Press, *Trump on E. Jean Carroll Sexual Assault Claim: “She’s Not My Type”*, HOLLYWOOD REP. (June 25, 2019); Associated Press, *Trump Says Famed Advice Columnist Who Accused Him of Sexual Assault Is “Not My Type”*, CHI. TRIB. (June 24, 2019); Associated Press, *Trump: Woman Who Accused Him of Sexual Assault Not His Type*, DENVER POST (June 24, 2019); Amber Athey, *Trump Says Columnist Who Accused Him of Rape Is “Not My Type”*, DAILY CALLER (June 24, 2019); Peter Baker & Neil Vigdor, *Trump, Accused Again of Sexual Misconduct, Insults Woman Who Said He Assaulted Her*, BOS. GLOBE (June 25, 2019); Antonia Blumberg, *Trump on E. Jean Carroll Accusing Him of Rape: “She’s Not My Type”*, HUFFINGTON POST (June 24, 2019); Doina Chiacu, *Trump Denies Woman’s Sexual Assault Accusation: “She’s Not My Type”*, BUS. INSIDER (June 25, 2019); Doina Chiacu, *Trump Denies Woman’s Sexual Assault Accusation: “She’s Not My Type”*, REUTERS (June 25, 2019); Burgess Everett & Melanie Zanona, *“I Believe the President”: GOP Stands by Trump on Sexual Assault Allegation*, POLITICO (June 25, 2019); Rebecca Falconer, *Trump Says He Didn’t Rape Author E. Jean Carroll: “She’s Not My Type”*, AXIOS (June 24, 2019); Megan Garber, *The Real Meaning of Trump’s “She’s Not My Type” Defense*, ATLANTIC (June 25, 2019); Rebecca Morin, *“She’s Not My Type”: Trump Again Denies E. Jean Carroll’s Sexual Misconduct Allegation*, USA TODAY (June 24, 2019); Ari Shapiro, *A Look at President Trump’s Pattern of Responding To Accusations Of Sexual Misconduct*, NPR (June 25, 2019); Matt Stieb, *Trump Responds to E. Jean Carroll Rape Allegation: “She’s Not My Type”*, CUT (June 25, 2019); Jia Tolentino, *E. Jean Carroll’s Accusation Against Donald Trump, and the Raising, and Lowering, of the Bar*, NEW YORKER (June 25, 2019); Jay Willis, *Donald Trump Responds to E. Jean Carroll’s Rape Allegation: “She’s Not My Type”*, GQ (June 25, 2019); Anthony Zurcher, *Trump Says Sexual Assault Accuser E Jean Carroll “Not My Type”*, BBC NEWS (June 25, 2019).

“Believe me. She would not be my first choice. That I can tell you.”¹⁵ He reportedly called that same woman “the cunt on the airplane” when he ran into her at a charity gala years after the assault.¹⁶ About a second woman, who claimed he forcibly pinned her to a wall and kissed her without consent while she was interviewing him for a magazine, Trump said to crowds at another rally, “Take a look. You take a look. Look at her, [then] look at her words. You tell me what you think. I don’t think so. I don’t think so.”¹⁷ Indeed, Trump often responds to claims that he has behaved inappropriately by simultaneously attacking the individual’s credibility and attractiveness. When a female journalist quoted him as saying in a 1992 interview that “you have to treat women like shit,” Trump insisted later, “The woman’s a liar, extremely unattractive, lots of problems because of her looks.”¹⁸

100. In the June 24 statement, Trump falsely stated that he did not rape Carroll.

101. On June 27, Birnbach and Martin went on the record to corroborate Carroll.¹⁹

102. Speaking to Carroll, Martin, and a reporter, Birnbach said:

“I remember [Carroll] saying repeatedly, he pulled down my tights . . . [Carroll] did say, he put his penis in me. And I said—my face just did it. What? He raped you? And [Carroll] said, eh, he kept pulling down—he pulled down my tights. He pulled down my tights . . . It just—it was horrible. We fought. And I said, let’s go to the police. No. Come to my house. No. I want to go home. I’ll take you to the

¹⁵ Jose A. DelReal, *Trump Mocks Sexual Assault Accusers: “She Would Not Be My First Choice”*, WASH. POST (Oct. 14, 2016).

¹⁶ BARRY LEVINE & MONIQUE EL-FAIZY, *ALL THE PRESIDENT’S WOMEN: DONALD TRUMP AND THE MAKING OF A PREDATOR* 72 (2019).

¹⁷ Naomi Lim, *Donald Trump on Accuser: “Take a Look at Her . . . I Don’t Think So”*, CNN (Oct. 13, 2016).

¹⁸ Nancy Collins, *Donald Trump Talks Family, Women in Unearthed Transcripts: “When I Come Home and Dinner’s Not Ready, I Go Through the Roof”*, HOLLYWOOD REP. (Oct. 13, 2016).

¹⁹ Michael Barbaro et al., *Corroborating E. Jean Carroll*, N.Y. TIMES (June 27, 2019).

police. No. It was 15 minutes of my life, it's over. Don't ever tell anybody. I just had to tell you."²⁰

103. Responding to Carroll, Birnbach, and a reporter, Martin said:

"From what I could sense of you, you were, A, you were handling it, as you handle things. She doesn't break down easily on anything. And there was none of that, as you told me. It wasn't like she started crying, or nothing that was a frantic kind of response to it. It was like, I can't believe this happened."²¹

104. Martin added: "I said, don't tell anybody. I wouldn't tell anybody this."²²

105. Separately, Birnbach observed, "I believe E. Jean in this episode that she recounted to me in 1996. Yes. Without hesitation. She's not a fabulist. She doesn't make things up."²³

VI. TRUMP'S FALSE STATEMENTS ABOUT CARROLL WERE MADE WITH KNOWLEDGE OF FALSITY OR RECKLESS DISREGARD FOR THE TRUTH

106. The false statements that Trump made about Carroll on June 21, 22, and 24, 2019, were published with knowledge of their falsity and/or with reckless disregard for the truth.

107. Trump knew who Carroll was at the time he raped her.

108. Trump identified Carroll on sight when they met at Bergdorf Goodman.

109. In that period, Trump moved in the same highly publicized New York City media circles as Carroll, who also appeared on her own popular daily television program.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ Jessica Bennett et al., *Why E. Jean Carroll, "the Anti-Victim," Spoke Up About Trump*, N.Y. TIMES (June 27, 2019).

110. In 1987, Trump and Carroll were photographed at a party together:



111. Trump has stated that he possesses “one of the great memories of all time.”²⁴

112. Trump has also described himself as a “very stable genius.”²⁵

113. In June 2019, Trump knew it was false to state that he had never met Carroll.

114. In June 2019, Trump knew it was false to state that he had no idea who Carroll was.

115. In June 2019, Trump knew it was false to state that he had never raped Carroll.

116. Trump’s other defamatory statements about Carroll in June 2019—that she had fabricated the rape accusation to increase her book sales, to carry out a political agenda, as part of a conspiracy with the Democratic Party, or in exchange for payment—rested on the express or deliberately-implied premise that Carroll’s underlying accusation was false. Because Trump knew that the accusation was true, he also knew that his other statements about Carroll were false.

117. Moreover, Trump lacked any factual basis for these highly specific statements regarding why Carroll had revealed to the public that he raped her at Bergdorf Goodman. And since all of these statements about Carroll were made to impute motives for lying, when in fact he

²⁴ Foreign Staff, *Donald Trump: I Have “One of the Greatest Memories of All Time”*, TELEGRAPH (Oct. 26, 2017).

²⁵ Daniella Diaz, *Trump: I’m a “Very Stable Genius”*, CNN (Jan. 6, 2018).

knew that Carroll had spoken the truth, Trump had strong reason to doubt the veracity of his own insulting claims. Trump thus published these statements with reckless disregard for the truth.

118. Trump also lacked any factual basis for stating (or affirmatively implying) that Carroll had falsely accused other men of sexual assault. And since he knew that her accusation against him was truthful, he had strong reason to doubt the veracity of his statement that she was lying about other men. Trump thus made this statement with reckless disregard for the truth.

119. Carroll did not reveal Trump's rape for any of the reasons imputed to her by Trump. Each and every statement that he made about her motives for coming forward—and her supposed conspiracy with political actors to fabricate a rape accusation—was false.

120. To the contrary, Carroll feared that revealing Trump's rape would cause terrible damage to her reputation, career, and personal life. That was especially true given Trump's famed litigiousness and public abuse of those who criticize him. Carroll made this decision to honor her values and to inspire other sexually abused women to seek justice and accountability.

121. With respect to politics, to the extent Carroll considered such things at all, it was principally to worry that coming forward might *benefit* Trump by firing up his base and affording him another opportunity to play the victim on national television.

122. Trump's series of false, insulting, and defamatory statements about Carroll—and his actual malice in making those statements—are fully consistent with his tried-and-true playbook for responding to credible public reports that he sexually assaulted women.

123. In 2005, Trump admitted—on a hot mic—to repeatedly sexually assaulting women in almost exactly the same manner that he had raped Carroll:

“I’d better use some Tic Tacs just in case I start kissing her [the woman Trump was looking at, whom he had never met before]. You know, I’m automatically attracted to beautiful—I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything. . . . Oh, [she has] nice legs, huh?”²⁶

124. Based on Carroll’s own experiences, Trump’s 2005 statement was not “locker room talk” or mere braggadocio. It was a true description of how Trump believes he can treat women—and of how he *has* treated them on many occasions, including at Bergdorf Goodman.

125. Indeed, Trump has openly suggested that sexual assault is inevitable when men and women interact. In 2013, for instance, he tweeted: “26,000 unreported sexual assaults [sic] in the military What did these geniuses expect when they put men & women together?”²⁷

126. In addition to Carroll, Trump has been accused publicly by over a dozen women of forcibly kissing them, groping them above or below the waist, or attempting to rape them—often upon meeting him for the very first time. Those women include Jill Harth, Jessica Leeds, Cathy Heller, Temple Taggart McDowell, Karena Virginia, Bridget Sullivan, Tasha Dixon, Mindy McGillivray, Rachel Crooks, Natasha Stoyanoff, Summer Zervos, and Cassandra Searles. Trump has responded to their accusations in a manner eerily similar to the statements he made about Carroll in June 2019.

127. A recently published book by Barry Levine and Monique El-Faizy documents 67 incidents of alleged inappropriate behavior by Trump toward women, including 26 allegations of unwanted sexual contact. Forty-three of the allegations of inappropriate behavior in the book had

²⁶ *Transcript: Donald Trump’s Taped Comments About Women*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 8, 2016).

²⁷ Daniella Diaz, *Trump Defends Tweet on Military Sexual Assault*, CNN (Sept. 8, 2016).

not been previously reported.²⁸ The book traces “Trump’s transformation from a kid from Queens to high school ‘ladies’ man’ into a womanizing, model-chasing, porn-star-frequenting philanderer,” who “repeatedly and systematically engaged in aggressive sexual pursuit of women over the course of many decades.”²⁹ In one instance, Karen Johnson describes Trump hiding behind a tapestry at his Mar-a-Lago home during a party and, when she walked by to use the restroom, grabbing her by the genitals, pulling her toward him, and kissing her without consent.³⁰ In another, Kristin Anderson describes Trump putting his hands up her skirt and touching her vagina through her underwear in a Manhattan nightclub. Trump denied that could have happened because he never would have been at a nightclub alone.³¹

128. Trump thus knew he was lying when he said that Carroll had fabricated her rape accusation for a hodgepodge of unsavory reasons that he himself had invented out of whole cloth. He knew she was telling the truth because he knew who she was and he knew that he had raped her, just as he had sexually assaulted many other women over many years.

VII. CARROLL SUFFERS REPUTATIONAL AND OTHER HARM

129. Trump’s false and insulting statements about Carroll were defamation *per se*. They tended to (and did) damage Carroll in her trade, occupation, and/or business, and they were defamatory on their face without reference to any extrinsic information.

130. Carroll has suffered harm as a direct result of Trump’s false, defamatory statements.

131. Carroll endured stoically when she kept secret the fact that Trump had raped her. But coming forward put her in the crosshairs of the most powerful man on the planet. He has since

²⁸ See LEVINE & EL-FAIZY, *supra* n.16, at 2.

²⁹ *Id.* at 2-3.

³⁰ *Id.* at 80-82, 88, 254.

³¹ *Id.* at 250-51.

used that platform to attack her integrity, demean her appearance, condemn her as a liar, and accuse her of conspiring with political operatives in a despicable lie.

132. These defamatory statements have caused Carroll emotional pain and suffering at the hands of the man who raped her, as well as injury to her reputation, honor, and dignity.

133. Carroll has suffered professional harm as a direct result of Trump's defamatory statements. Carroll's professional success is inextricably bound up with her *Ask E. Jean* advice column, where readers look to her for wisdom, wit, honesty, integrity, and courage. By attacking Carroll, Trump has injured the reputation on which she makes her livelihood and attracts readers.

134. Trump's defamatory statements caused Carroll to lose the support and goodwill of many of her readers. Many were turned off by even the idea of writing to a woman whom the President of the United States branded a "liar." Since Trump defamed her, some fans have stopped sending letters altogether—thus impairing Carroll's column, which requires a steady flood of compelling letters to which she can respond. In the months of July, August, and September 2019, Carroll received roughly 50% fewer letters than she received during the same period in 2018.

135. Carroll is an advice columnist whose reputation is the very lifeblood of her trade, and Trump's defamatory statements have therefore inflicted wide-ranging and substantial harm.

136. Carroll filed this lawsuit to obtain redress for those injuries.

CAUSE OF ACTION: DEFAMATION

137. Plaintiff Carroll incorporates by reference all preceding paragraphs and re-alleges them as if set forth fully herein.

138. Trump published statements to the media on June 21, 22, and 24, 2019.

139. Each of those statements identified—and was "of or concerning"—Carroll.

140. Each of those statements contained numerous falsehoods about Carroll, whether on their face and/or by virtue of a clear implication affirmatively intended by Trump.

141. Trump's false statements regarding Carroll were defamatory *per se*.

142. Trump's false and defamatory statements were published throughout New York State and around the world on television, in newspapers and magazines, on social media, and elsewhere in print and on the internet. Trump ensured that his false and defamatory statements about Carroll would receive a wide circulation by making them to the national press.

143. Trump made these false and defamatory statements knowing that they were false or with reckless disregard for their truth or falsity.

144. Trump made these false statements with ill will and spite, and with wanton, reckless, or willful disregard for their injurious effects on Carroll and Carroll's rights.

145. Trump's false and defamatory statements caused Carroll to suffer reputational, emotional, and professional harm, as alleged above.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Carroll prays for relief as follows:

- a. Ordering Trump to retract any and all defamatory statements;
- b. Ordering Trump to pay compensatory damages in an amount to be determined at trial;
- c. Ordering Trump to pay punitive damages in an amount to be determined at trial; and
- d. Awarding pre- and post-judgment interest, costs, and such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Dated: November 4, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

By:



Roberta A. Kaplan
Matthew J. Craig
Martha E. Fitzgerald
KAPLAN HECKER & FINK LLP
350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 7110
New York, New York 10118
Tel: (212) 763-0883
Fax: (212) 564-0883
rkaplan@kaplanhecker.com
mcraig@kaplanhecker.com
mfitzgerald@kaplanhecker.com

Counsel for Plaintiff E. Jean Carroll